DRN-5596196

The complaint

Mr H complains that post hire charges for a car applied by Northgate Vehicle Hire Limited (Northgate) were unreasonable. He would like a fair assessment of the damage, proper communication of the charges and his deposit returned.

What happened

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties so I won't repeat them again here, instead I will focus on giving the reasons for my decision.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Having done so I have reached the following conclusions: -

- I appreciate that charges applied at the end of the hire agreement were significant, just under £4000. However, this includes excess miles and off hire charges. Mr H hasn't made these a specific part of his complaint so I can't consider these here – it wouldn't be fair to do so as Northgate hasn't had a chance to consider these issues.
- As part of Mr H's agreement, he was liable for damage incurred, and Northgate had the right to retain any deposit paid. So, I can't say Northgate were at fault either in making charges or in retaining Mr H's deposit
- From the report and photographic evidence provided I think Northgate has evidenced the damage it has charged for. I appreciate Mr H isn't happy with the level of the charges and asked for a fair assessment. I think Northgate has offered that.
- Northgate suggested if Mr H got a comparison estimate on a like for like basis i.e. covering the damage identified and repair work needed it will review its charges against this. The estimate needs to be based on labour charges of £55 per hour and include a detailed breakdown of labour times, itemized part costs and paint/material calculations. I think that offer is fair and I would encourage Mr H to do this. If he gets this information and feels Northgate's response to this is unfair, he can of course come back to this service.
- Mr H has also made the point the invoices provided by Northgate were unclear and that he kept on being invoiced for new charges. I have seen the invoices Northgate sent – there were a number as it invoiced Mr H separately for the different charges it applied. So, there was an invoice for damage charges, another for excess miles and one showing a fuel credit. Whilst it might have been convenient to have had one overall invoice it's not for us to tell businesses how to administer their business.
- Mr H has also made a point about the collection of the vehicle. As I understand it Northgate gave 48 hours' notice of collection but as the keys weren't left with the

vehicle it was unable to collect it hence its return the next day to do so. I am not sure what else Northgate could have done in this situation.

- Finally, I have also noted that Northgate has offered to look into an affordable repayment plan for Mr H. We would expect businesses to do this when customers have financial problems so I would encourage Mr H to engage with Northgate about this if that would be helpful for him.

My final decision

My final decision is that I don't uphold this complaint

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 19 August 2025.

Bridget Makins
Ombudsman